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(1)

10/47

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY No. 10 -7 OCT 1969

NE1/13

BRITISH EMBASSY,
AMMAN.
3 October, 1969

Dear Richard,

Embassy contacts with Al-Fatah

You will have gathered from allusions in our reporting and through other channels that members of the staff have, in the course of the last few months, been able to establish informal contact at a fairly high level with Al-Fatah (with the knowledge of the Jordanian authorities). In the early stages it did not seem that the chap we were in touch with was of any great importance in the Movement. However, because of the increasing authority with which he speaks and his professed unconcern that contact with British Embassy officials would do him any harm, we have recently gained the impression not only that he is a bigger fish than we had thought - how big we do not yet know - but also that he has been speaking to us "under instructions".

2. In a recent conversation, we tried to probe Al-Fatah's views on establishing contacts with foreign governments. Our contact was very firm in his rejection of this idea. He said that Fatah as a mass movement was interested in contacts with the people not with governments; the Vietcong had fought for 20 years without making any official contacts. He gave as an example Fatah's relationship with the Libyan people which has continued undisturbed by the revolution and this would have been impossible, if they had had a relationship with King Idris's régime. Secondly, he said that for Fatah to have official contacts with foreign governments would be breaking the tacit agreement which exists between Fatah and the Jordanian government, and would also be inciting the embassies in question to break the protocol rules which demand that all contacts in Jordan be made through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This, however, may have been for the record, for he did subsequently say that it might be worth contacting the West Germans and talking to them, but that he would have nothing to do with the Americans. We got the impression that he was keen to continue our informal dialogue. The reason for this discrimination in our favour is not clear, but it may be just a case of "the devil you know".

3. He seemed to accept our assurances that we bore no ill will towards Fatah and were aware that the recent outrages in the U.K. were the work of the PFLP. We of course emphasised that such outrages do nothing but harm to the Palestinian cause in

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Copy to IRD, PVSD, RD, MOD D14
(1) Enter
(2) Mr Tripp
(3) Mr Evans/r.
(4) Consular Dept
Cabinet Office (Chr. Summaryes)

I think that this is all right. The security of the Embassy and of the British community would be less if this channel of communication had not been established.

R.E. 10/11 p.a.
Mr Logan 10/11

in British opinion and he has on more than one occasion made it clear that Fatah entirely agree, and condemn such actions. He said, however, that Fatah had no intention of doing anything at all about the PFLP. It was inevitable that nationalist movements should have small extremist groups at the fringe. Fatah, he said, was however a mass movement commanding the loyalty of 91 per cent of the Palestinian fedayeen. The PFLP, a small movement totally lacking in mass support, could never be an effective revolutionary movement and would in the natural course of events simply wither away.

5. We think this is a useful dialogue. It enables us to keep in touch with what is now virtually one of the pillars of the state, and, as the form of current Palestinian nationalism, a movement which may one day be a government. But, most important, this link has already enabled us to sort out tactfully and quickly the occassional dangerous misunderstanding between the fedayeen and individual British subjects and in this respect it may prove invaluable in the months ahead. This is certainly the view of the Jordanian authorities who are fully aware of, and strongly welcome, this quiet and informal dialogue as a means of avoiding a confrontation with the fedayeen on ground not of their own choosing.

Yours ever,

Christopher

(C. D. Lush)

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RECEIVED IN REGISTRY No. 10 10 OCT 1969

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BRITISH EMBASSY, AMMAN.

10/47

10 October, 1969.

Dear Leonard,

Conversation with "Ahmad" of Al Fatah

In extension of the contacts referred to in Lush's letter 10/47 of 3 October to Evans, I was able this week to secure an introduction to Ahmad Azhari, known in Al Fatah only by his name Ahmad. He is ostensibly the Deputy-Director of the Fatah Information Office in Amman, but those who know him seem to feel that he occupies a position in the movement senior to that of the Director of Information, Kamal Adwani.

2. He was very willing to see me although he emphasised, as did I, that the contact was personal and in no way represented an official link between Al Fatah and the British Embassy. He did, however, accept that it was to the benefit of both parties that mutual understanding should be increased and readily agreed that it would be useful to continue our conversations at a future date.

3. He was optimistic about the progress that Al Fatah is making on its time-table of liberation. He said that they had been able, through the PASC, to reach a stage of military co-ordination which they had not expected to reach before 1970. This was a reference to the new PASC Strike Force which recently undertook its first operation. This Strike Force is a unit made up of men from Al Fatah, As'Sa'iqa and the PDFLP, who are in theory paid, trained and deployed entirely as a PASC unit not in any way beholden to their own groups. Al Fatah he said is militarily in a transition period between "hit and run" and "overrun and hold" operations. He gave no date for the beginning of the latter phase, but he said that 1970 would be a very difficult year for Israel. Al Fatah does not, however, appear to be in a hurry, since Ahmad talked in terms of a struggle lasting from 12 to 15 years before the final stage of creating a democratic Palestine could be embarked upon.

4. Within the fedayeen movement as a whole Al Fatah did not insist on a majority vote in any of the joint organisations. They did, however, insist on remaining the "back bone", in other words the single largest bloc. This attitude enabled them to encourage the unification of commando groups without appearing to wish to dominate. However, Ahmad asserted that Al Fatah was strong enough to keep control in the event of internal disorders within Jordan, and that a repetition of the Dablan affair of last November would not involve them, even if the PFLP were involved. He said that Al Fatah was in no way committed to come to the aid of any and every commando organisation that got itself into trouble. From this I think one can infer that while Fatah will not itself risk the odium of clobbering the PFLP, it would not intervene if the régime had a go. What would happen if the régime had a go at As'Sa'iqa, which is a member of the PASC, is more problematical. However, Ahmad claimed that his organisation

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has enough military police to control their own men and everybody else as well. He repeated what we have heard from elsewhere that Al Fatah has contact with the Jordan Government and has no wish to create trouble for them (or for that matter for Lebanon). It was on this point that Al Fatah was unable to agree with George Habbash.

5. We discussed the implications for the Palestinian movement in general of the PFLP bomb outrages in Europe and Ahmad asserted that it was not in Al Fatah's interests to make enemies abroad: they needed friends. We have had sufficient indication in the past to support this claim. We should, I think, try to encourage both the press and those in Britain concerned with the threat to our own internal security from Palestinians to distinguish between Al Fatah, which is going out of its way to emphasise its disapproval of wanton terrorism, and the PFLP, a small group which does present a threat. It would be helpful if you could ensure that the point is made to Scotland Yard and Immigration and Customs Officers that to treat all Palestinians (including members of Al Fatah) as if they were members of PFLP will only alienate the lot. Indeed Ahmad quoted to me a recent incident at London Airport when a member of Al Fatah, a graduate from AUB who had been in the U.S.A. on a "lecture tour" had been forced by customs officials to strip and had been very unpleasantly treated and addressed in what was described to me as bad language. That this incident was mentioned to me at all indicates how seriously such misunderstandings could affect fedayeen treatment of British subjects here.

Yours ever,
John

(J. A. Shepherd)

(LAST PAPER)

Just before we went to press reports were printed in a number of British papers in which it was said that there have been several unexplained fires in Jewish stores in London, and that an Egyptian-made bomb and a slogan attributing the fire to Al-Fatah had also been discovered. These reports were first published in the "Sunday Telegraph". Al-Fatah wishes to deny absolutely that they have ever been involved in any such activities anywhere outside occupied Palestine. These reports and any evidence claiming to establish that representatives of Al-Fatah have been connected with any form of malicious damage are completely false. We publish below a statement from Al-Fatah.

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AL FATAH STATEMENT

The PALESTINE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT AL FATAH has learnt through British press reports that its supposedly "British agents" had been "placing fire bombs" in London stores.

The Press reports claim that a "brass plaque" was found after a fire incident in one of the London stores with the inscription "This is the work of Al Fatah."

The Palestine National Liberation Movement AL FATAH would like to draw the attention to the ludicrous nature of these allegations and notes with regret that certain members of the British Press have departed from their traditional responsible attitude and lent themselves to being the vehicle for such gross misrepresentation of the true nature and national aims of AL FATAH.

The Palestine National Liberation Movement is confident that the British people will not be deceived by these allegations and will treat these manoeuvres with the derision and contempt they deserve. Indeed, this is but the latest Zionest inspired campaign aimed at smearing our Liberation Movement and intimidating and silencing anyone aroused by his conscience to seeing the justice of our cause, and recognising for what it is the ruthless spoilation of a whole people by Zionist fanatics.

Moreover the material details given about the so-called 'evidence' allegedly found on the site of one fire incident (i.e. a 'brass plaque' with inscription), bear evidence to nothing except to the confusion into which have been thrown the Zionist enemies of the just cause of the Palestine people.

That these Zionist enemies have no hesitation in resorting to such vile accusations is only indicative of their failing morale.

AL FATAH would like to stress emphatically that its military operations are carried out exclusively against Zionist targets in occupied Palestine, and never outside these areas. The friendship and understanding of the British people are too valuable to the cause of the Palestinian people to be so irresponsibly thrown away and jeopardised by any ill-considered attack against British property on British soil.

AL FATAH would like to remind the Zionist counterfeiters that all its military operations are carried out exclusively by its military arm AL ASSIFA under this very name. Could they take heed of this very important fact, and alter accordingly any inscription they would like in the future to commit to 'brass plaques'? ■

(LAST PAPER)